

The Front Page

For nearly a decade, the staff of the venerable Chicago Daily News has lived with rumors that the paper was about to fold. Last week, publisher Marshall Field V summoned editors and staffers together in the newsroom, stood on a desk and all but made it official. "With deep regret," he said, "I announce that

we must contemplate ceasing publication of The Chicago Daily News on March 4." Field's announcement left open only one small and improbable loophole: the prospect that the paper's 200 editorial employees might accept wage cuts that would help the News limp along for the time being. Last year's losses were an estimated \$11 million.

For newspapermen and newspaper buffs all across the country, the passing of the Daily News, Chicago's last afternoon paper, would be sad news. The News first went on sale in January 1876, four years after the Great Chicago Fire, and won a reputation for flamboyant, hard-nosed reporting, blended with a professional concern for writing style.

Talents: Over the years, the paper won a total of fifteen Pulitzer Prizes and nourished such literary talents as Carl Sandburg, John Gunther, columnist Mike Royko and distinguished Asia correspondent Keyes Beech. The News was also the real-life model for staffer Ben

Hecht's 1928 play, "The Front Page," written with Charles MacArthur.

The News was always enterprising. In 1898, it became the first newspaper in the U.S. to set up a worldwide network of its own correspondents, and it was the first paper to use Linotype machines. But in recent years, along with many other afternoon and evening newspapers, the News fell victim to nightly television shows, and thus saw circulation erode and advertising fall. And none of the staff reshuffling or front-page reshaping tried by editor-in-chief James Hoge did much to staunch the bleeding. As it happened, Hoge was on television last week, doing a commercial for the paper. "Everybody's talking about the new Daily News," he declared. He was right—but not, sadly enough, in the sense he intended.